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Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

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Michaelson, Dawn M., "A Selkie's View" (2013). *International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings*. 101.

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A Selkie's View

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Keywords: Manipulation, smocking, pleating, chiffon

Have you ever imagined what it must feel like to gaze at the shore while underwater? The oceans currents move your body as the sun's rays play with your vision; you feel weightless. Impishly, you envision yourself as a mythical sea creature swimming curiously along the shoreline – a selkie.

I wanted to bring this underwater experience to you by designing a strapless hi-low dress that portrayed the color, texture, and movement of being underwater. Italian chiffon featuring vivid colors, hues, and varied patterns was used for the dress as it best represented the colors seen underwater. The unique pleated affect was achieved with a smocking pleater that runs specifically spaced holding threads at the top twelve inches of fabric for the entire width of the chiffon. The dress is made up of seven different sections that were initially marked on the dress form. The holding threads in the chiffon were tightened to pleat the fabric and then draped directly onto a dress form for manipulation. Each section features manipulated fabric with a different direction and/or depth of fabric fold. The front upper bodice sections continue to drape beyond the center front of the bodice, crisscrossing at the neckline and cascading down the back of the dress. The lower section of



the dress is made up of one piece of fabric, manipulated to four inches below the waistline so it contours to the body, and then freely cascades into a hi-lo fishtail hemline. After each section was manipulated on the dress form it was thread marked and removed. The pieces were then underlined for support, all of the pleats tacked in place, and the holding threads removed. Various colored beads were placed randomly in the chiffon pleats to allow light to reflect off of them – an effect that often happens while underwater. The pieces were sewn together with an internal corset structure of coutil and boning added to provide support to the strapless design along with a center back invisible zipper. Finally, a purple satin lining was added with the right side of the skirt fabric facing inward so it could be seen in the fishtail design of the dress.

